United Nations A/64/296

General Assembly

Distr.: General
14 August 2009

Original: English

Sixty-fourth session
Item 96 (w) of the provisional agenda*
General and complete disarmament: transparency in armaments

Continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development

Note by the Secretary-General

1. In its resolution 63/69, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General with the assistance of a group of governmental experts "to prepare a report on the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development, taking into account the work of the Conference on Disarmament, the views expressed by Member States and the reports of the Secretary-General on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development, with a view to taking a decision at its sixty-fourth session".

2. Pursuant to that resolution the Secretary-General has the honour to submit to the General Assembly the above-mentioned report prepared with the assistance of the Group of Governmental Experts on the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development.

* A/64/150.

09-46080 (E) 090909

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Report on the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development

Summary

The report of the 2009 Group of Governmental Experts on the continuing operation and further development of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms examines ways and the need to improve the relevance of and promoting universal participation in the Register. The report provides up-to-date data and analysis on information reported by States; an assessment of the continued and future operation of the Register, including regional priorities and relevance; and examination of issues related to the further development of the Register, taking into account advanced technology in armaments and military equipment, current security and capacity concerns and emerging tactical methods.

The report notes that the Register has made significant progress since its establishment in 1992 but that efforts should continue to ensure its relevance for all regions and enhance the universal participation by Member States. The Group concluded that the Register remains an important confidence-building measure and reaffirmed the necessity of consistent and timely reports to the Register, including submission of "nil" returns.

The Group considered a number of proposals aimed at expanding the current reporting categories and adding new categories to the Register. They represent both a new class of equipment that is just beginning to be widely used in combat operations and a category of small arms and light weapons (SALW). However, the Group was unable to reach consensus on either of those proposals to expand the Register's scope and adapt it to new political and military circumstances.

The Group endorsed the recommendations of the 2006 Group of Governmental Experts. It made a number of recommendations, including measures to assist Member States to build capacity for submission of meaningful reports, including on SALW, and made adjustments to the standardized reporting forms. The report encourages further examination of efforts to enhance the scope of the Register. Furthermore, the report recommends that the Secretary-General seek the views of Member States, including whether the continued absence of SALW as a main category in the United Nations Register has limited the relevance of the Register and so directly affected decisions on the participation of Member States in this instrument.

In view of the 2009 Group's reduced time for consideration, the Group recommended that future Groups be given ample time to complete their programme of work on regular reviews of the Register and include the widest possible range of views.

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Foreword by the Secretary-General

The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms — the only global transparency instrument on conventional arms transfers — plays an important role in preventing excessive and destabilizing accumulations of conventional arms, enhancing confidence, promoting stability and increasing international peace and security. Consistent and universal participation in the Register by all Member States may also significantly influence debates at the United Nations aimed in particular at promoting transparency in military matters, including the global trade of conventional arms and combating their illicit trafficking.

By providing transparency of conventional arms transfers, the United Nations Register assists in minimizing the risk of misunderstanding or miscalculation and thereby contributes to facilitating bilateral and regional dialogue, building confidence and trust among States, and encouraging peaceful resolutions of conflicts. To that end, Member States are encouraged to report all international transfers of conventional arms to the Register.

The regular triennial reviews of the Register's operation provide for an essential means to assess achievements, evaluate shortfalls and identify ways forward to better utilize the Register. The 2009 Group of Governmental Experts assessed the current status of affairs with regard to reporting by Member States to the Register at the global and regional levels and noted that significant efforts have been made in promoting the relevance of the Register.

To that end, the Group considered a number of substantial proposals relating to the expansion of the Register's scope. These, for example, include proposals to have small arms and light weapons (SALW) as a new reporting category to the Register, and to better utilize the potential of the Register as a confidence-building measure by encouraging wider submissions on military holdings and procurement through national production. Unfortunately, the Group was unable to secure consensus concerning any significant proposal to expand the scope of the Register.

While the present report reconfirms the recommendations made in 2006, it also includes minor improvements to the standardized reporting forms with a view to facilitating the participation of Member States in the Register. Meanwhile, bearing in mind that the illicit trafficking of SALW and their excessive accumulation constitute a serious security concern for many States worldwide, the Group recommended seeking the views of Member States on whether the absence of SALW as a main category in the Register has limited its relevance.

The Secretariat will continue to support the promotion of the Register and assist Member States in their capacity-building efforts so as to achieve universal participation in this instrument. I also take note of the Group's concern regarding the time allotted to this session.

As the international community is faced with significant challenges to peace and security caused by armed conflicts, terrorist activities and illicit trafficking of arms, I encourage Member States to complement their annual submissions to the Register with views on how to improve its operation to better address these risks. I also encourage Member States to provide their views on whether the inclusion of SALW as a new category of the Register will further increase the Register's relevance.

I thank the members of the Group of Governmental Experts for their work in preparing the present report, which I commend to the General Assembly for its consideration.

Letter of transmittal

6 August 2009

Sir,

I have the honour to submit herewith the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development. The list of members of the Group, which you appointed pursuant to paragraph 7 (b) of General Assembly resolution 61/77 comprised the following experts:

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Buenos Aires

Brazil

Mr. Carlos **Perez**
Counsellor, Permanent Mission of
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China

Mr. **Sun** Lei
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Captain Alexandra **Simard**
Division of Armaments General Staff of Armed Forces
Paris

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Mr. Vipul **Vipul**
Deputy Secretary
Disarmament and International Security Affairs
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Iran (Islamic Republic of)

Mr. Reza **Najafi** (First and third sessions)
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Mr. **Youn** Jong Kwon (Third session)
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The report was prepared between February and July 2009, during which time the Group held three sessions: the first and second in Geneva from 16 to 20 February and from 27 April to 1 May, respectively, and the third in New York from 6 to 10 July.

Following substantial discussions, the Group concluded that the Register continues to be an important global confidence-building measure, and efforts are to be continued towards the goal of universal participation in the Register.

The Group considered a number of proposals aimed at the expansion of the existing categories of conventional arms and introduction of new categories including that of small arms and light weapons (SALW). However, it is my understanding that, due in part to the more restricted time available for the Group fully to discuss these proposals, it was unable to reach agreement on any of them. The final session of the Group focused on a compromise proposal to add a new category for SALW. Regrettably, therefore, and without the opportunity for an additional session, the Group recommended that the Secretary-General should seek views of Member States on the introduction of SALW as a new category of the Register.

The members of the Group wish to express their appreciation for the assistance they received from members of the Secretariat of the United Nations. In particular, they wish to thank Yuriy Kryvonos, who served as Secretary of the Group, and Rachel Stohl, who served as consultant to the Group. The Group is also grateful to Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for the support received from him.

I have been requested by the Group of Governmental Experts, as its Chairperson, to submit to you, on its behalf, the present report, which was approved by consensus.

(*Signed*) Roberto García **Moritán**
Chairperson of the Group of Governmental Experts
on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms

I. Introduction

A. Establishment of the Register

1. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms was established in accordance with resolution 46/36 L, entitled "Transparency in armaments", in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to establish and maintain a universal and non-discriminatory Register of Conventional Arms, and set out the arrangements for the consideration of its development. The General Assembly called upon Member States to provide annually for the Register data on exports and imports of conventional arms in the seven categories covered by the Register pending the expansion of its scope, and invited them to include information on military holdings and procurement through national production, and relevant national policies.

2. Pursuant to that resolution, the Secretary-General convened a panel of governmental technical experts in 1992 to bring the Register into operation. Endorsing the recommendations of the Panel (see A/47/342 and Corr.1), the General Assembly called upon all Member States to provide the requested data and information to the Secretary-General annually, beginning in 1993 (see General Assembly resolution 47/52 L).

B. Review of the Register

3. In its resolution 46/36 L, the General Assembly decided to look at the Register's future expansion and in so doing, decided to keep the scope and participation in the Register under review. The General Assembly called for an initial review in 1994. The 1992 report of the panel of technical experts also envisaged future reviews to address those issues. As a result, the Register has thus far been reviewed at three-year intervals.

1994-2000 Groups of Governmental Experts

4. By its resolution 49/75 C, the General Assembly took note of the report of the 1994 Group of Governmental Experts (see A/49/316) and decided to keep the scope of and participation in the Register under review, requesting Member States to provide the Secretary-General with their views in this regard, as well as on transparency measures related to weapons of mass destruction.

5. The 1997 Group of Governmental Experts continued to elaborate on technical procedures to ensure the effective operation of the Register. It proposed extending the reporting deadline from 30 April to 31 May, encouraged the submission of information on national points of contact and the use of the "Remarks" column in the reporting format (see A/52/316 and Corr.2). It also recommended the inclusion of information, provided on a voluntary basis, on procurement through national production and on military holdings in the annual reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly.

6. With respect to encouraging greater participation in the Register, the 2000 Group of Governmental Experts recommended the holding of regional and subregional workshops and seminars with the assistance of interested States; the

introduction of a simplified form for providing "nil" returns; and the updating of the United Nations information booklet on the Register.

7. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/54 I, the 2000 Group of Governmental Experts, after thorough consideration of the matter, recognized the importance and relevance of the principle of transparency to weapons of mass destruction. Taking into account that the Register covered conventional arms only, the Group agreed that the issue of transparency in weapons of mass destruction should be addressed by the General Assembly (see A/55/281).

2003-2006 Groups of Governmental Experts

8. The 2003 and 2006 Groups of Governmental Experts concluded that considerable progress had been made towards achieving a relatively high level of participation in the Register (see A/58/274 and A/61/261). Recognizing the role that regional workshops and seminars played in promoting the Register's progress, the Groups recommended the continuation of such efforts and the increase in cooperation between the United Nations Secretariat and relevant regional/subregional organizations.

9. The Groups of Governmental Experts also agreed on technical adjustments to three of the seven existing categories of the Register as follows:

(a) The 2003 Group recommended lowering the reporting threshold of large-calibre artillery systems from 100 mm to 75 mm in category III; and the inclusion, on an exceptional basis, of man-portable air-defence systems (MANPADS) as a subcategory in category VII, "Missiles and missile launchers". The recommendations were endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 58/54.

(b) The 2006 Group recommended that the reporting threshold of "warships" under category VI be reduced from 750 to 500 metric tons. The recommendation was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 61/77.

10. International transfers of SALW within the Register's framework were addressed by both the 2003 and 2006 Groups of Governmental Experts. The 2003 Group noted that Member States which were in a position to do so could provide additional background information on international transfers of SALW made or modified to military specifications and intended for military use. The 2006 Group further recommended an optional standardized reporting form for submission of information on SALW transfers.

11. In addition to reaffirming many of the recommendations of the 2003 Group of Governmental Experts, the 2006 Group also notably recommended the following:

(a) Only transfers involving Member States should be reported to the Register;

(b) Member States should participate in the United Nations Register in order to achieve the shared goals of this global transparency mechanism, including universal participation;

(c) The Office for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat should overhaul the Register database, with a view to making it more user-friendly, and conduct a pilot project with the support of interested States to test the feasibility of electronic filing of reports to the Register; and develop and expand the Register website.

2009 Group of Governmental Experts

12. The 2009 Group of Governmental Experts was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/77, in which it also requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development, taking into account the views expressed by Member States and the reports of the Secretary-General on this issue.

II. Review of the continuing operation of the Register[1]

A. General

13. The Group reviewed the data and information submitted by Governments for the Register for the calendar years 1992-2007 and tables and graphs with statistical data compiled by the Office for Disarmament Affairs. The Group benefited from the Occasional Paper of the Office for Disarmament Affairs,[2] non-papers from Member States, and analysis of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)[3] on the operation of the Register and its further development. The Group utilized this information to develop conclusions and recommendations for improving the relevance of and promoting universal participation in the Register.

B. Relevance of the Register

14. The Group discussed the continuing importance of the relevance of the Register. Experts agreed that it was important to enhance the relevance of the Register with a view towards encouraging transparency of arms transfers to prevent excessive and destabilizing accumulations of conventional weapons, as well as preventing armed conflicts.

15. Some experts raised the issue of movements of conventional arms to the territory of other States without a transfer of title or control over the equipment, arguing that such movements could have a destabilizing impact and should therefore be considered as transfers. Those experts expressed the view that such issues could be discussed in the future in the context of discussions on the definition of transfer. However, it was also noted by some experts that the General Assembly in its resolution 46/36 L and the 1992 Panel of Governmental Experts in its report (A/47/342 and Corr.1) had concluded that such movements were not transfers in the context of the Register.

16. Some experts also discussed the role of the Register as a mechanism for helping to identify destabilizing accumulations of conventional arms and as a confidence-building measure. In its role as a transparency measure, the Register is

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[1] Submissions in 2009 for the calendar year 2008 are still ongoing. The latest completed calendar year is 2007, for which submissions were received in 2008.

[2] *Assessing the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms*, United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs Occasional Papers, No. 16, April 2009 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.09.IX.4).

[3] Paul Holtom, *Transparency in Transfers of Small Arms and Light Weapons: Reports to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, 2003-2006*. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Policy Paper No. 22, July 2008.

intended to help build confidence by providing a mechanism for an effective dialogue between countries and contribute to regional and international peace and security.

17. Many experts noted that the focus on the Register's seven categories is not equally relevant to all countries around the world, and that its relevance might be affected without the adaptation of its scope. Experts reiterated the views from the 2006 report, which noted that the focus on heavy conventional weapons are less of a particular concern in some regions and subregions, which has resulted in the Register becoming less relevant to those particular regions. Some experts said that without the inclusion of SALW as a new category, the Register would lose relevance in many regions and participation could continue to decrease. The Group also noted the need for the Register to be technologically relevant. Experts also agreed that a lack of relevance undermines the ability of the Register to serve as a confidence-building measure.

C. Universality and extent of participation

18. Since the inception of the Register in 1991, an average of nearly 100 Governments have submitted reports each year on arms transfers. During the period 1999-2006, the number of submissions increased to over 100 submissions a year, with a record high 126 submissions in 2001. However, reports for calendar year 2007 fell to 91 national reports, the lowest total since 1998. In addition, the Group noted that few States report by the 31 May deadline; for example, only 51 States had reported by 31 May in calendar year 2006, 27 States in calendar year 2007 and 28 States in calendar year 2008.

19. The Group analysed variations in submissions for the period since the last review in 2006: from 117 for calendar year 2005 to 113 for 2006 and to 91 for 2007. Indeed, the Group felt that that was a substantial decrease. Although it was noted that there was more than one reason for the reduction in reporting, the Group highlighted the fact that the decrease in the number of "nil" returns for calendar year 2007 parallels the decreasing number of reports filed. While the Group was unable to make judgements about States' reasons for not submitting "nil" returns, it recalled the conclusions of previous Groups of Governmental Experts that outreach, updating national points of contact and follow-up by the Office for Disarmament Affairs are essential to ensuring that States are both aware of the possibilities of submission of "nil" returns, if they were not engaged in international transfers of arms, and that such reports are equally important in terms of achieving the universal participation in the Register.

20. In calendar year 2007, 39 of the 91 submissions were "nil" returns, representing over 40 per cent of total reports. This total, however, reflected a decrease in the number of "nil" reports filed since the last Register review. In calendar year 2005, the total number of "nil" returns submitted was 58 of the 117 submissions and in 2006 the number was 61 of the 113 submissions.

21. While reviewing the consistency of the participation of States in the Register, the Group noted that 43 States had participated every year since the Register's inception. The Group also noted that 74 States had participated in the Register in each of the three calendar years, 2005, 2006 and 2007, since the last review of the Register.

22. The Group underlined the fact that continued progress towards the goal of universal participation would greatly increase the value of the Register as a global confidence-building measure. The Group observed that the Register is able to reveal trends in the conventional arms trade, as nearly all the major exporters and importers of those weapons submit regular reports. In addition, the Register reveals transfers involving Member States that do not participate in the Register.

D. Reports on exports and imports

23. The average level of reporting exports and imports remains consistent. The Group reflected on the consistency of the reporting of Member States on exports and imports, with 70 States submitting information on exports (including "nil" reports) and 59 submitting information on imports (including "nil" reports) in each of the last three calendar years — 2005, 2006 and 2007.

24. The Group also noted that reports on exports and imports enabled the identification of States that participated in international transfers of conventional arms in the seven major categories and SALW, even if a State did not participate in the Register. Such information demonstrates the value of the Register as a global transparency instrument.

E. Reports on additional background information

25. The Group discussed the provision of additional background information on a voluntary basis. For calendar year 2007, such information was included in 57 submissions (out of 91 reports), 26 of which contain data on national military holdings, 19 on procurement through national production, and 48 on SALW. In calendar year 2005, 27 submissions contained data on national military holdings and 23 on procurement through national production. In calendar year 2006, 28 submissions contained data on national military holdings and 23 on procurement through national production. For calendar years 2005, 2006 and 2007, 23 States reported on military holdings and 17 on procurement through national production in all three years.

26. Experts noted that the reporting of military holdings and procurement from national production demonstrates a potential confidence-building measure that could complement the information on exports and imports of conventional arms. Experts discussed a number of reasons for varied reporting of Member States, including, most importantly, geopolitical concerns and political sensitivities. Some experts argued that the current system, which places reporting on military holdings and national procurement on a different level, is inherently discriminatory to States without a national defence industry.

27. The Group also noted that a standardized form for the optional reporting of military holdings and procurement through national production does not exist. The Group discussed a proposal for a standardized form for such information to facilitate participation and submissions on procurement through national production and military holdings. Some experts mentioned that the utility of such information could be helpful in addressing the issue of destabilizing accumulations of conventional arms and data collection.

28. The Group discussed the progress achieved in reporting international transfers of SALW as additional background information to the national reports to the Register. Following the recommendation of the 2003 Group of Governmental Experts on the Register, Member States were invited to report voluntarily on international transfers of SALW. In calendar year 2003, 5 States reported on SALW transfers (out of 115 total reports), in 2004, 6 States (out of 117 total reports) and in 2005, 5 States (out of 117 reporting States). Experts noted that since the introduction of the standardized reporting form for the submission of international transfers of SALW in 2006, reporting has increased. By calendar year 2006, 37 States reported on SALW transfers, and the total number of reporting States increased to 48 in calendar year 2007. The increase reflected a wider scope in the details of transfers and a greater diversity of reporting.

F. Assessment of the implementation at the regional level

29. The Group reviewed the levels of participation across regions and assessed variations in reporting from region to region. All countries in Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Group of West European and Other States have participated in the Register at least once since its inception. Many States belonging to the African, Asian, and Latin American and Caribbean regional groups have not submitted their reports regularly. In Africa, only 4 States have reported to the Register in each of the calendar years 2005, 2006 and 2007. In Asia, 14 States submitted reports in each of the same three calendar years, in Eastern Europe 21 States submitted the 3 reports, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the total was 8 and in Western European and Other States, 29 States reported in each of the above three years.

30. The irregular reporting of African, Asian, and Latin American and Caribbean regional groups, in particular, explains a gap between the total number of States that have reported to the Register and the annual number of reports. In calendar year 2007, regional participation fell in those regions, with 42 per cent fewer reports from African States, 28 per cent fewer reports from Asian States and 46 per cent fewer reports from Latin American and Caribbean States in comparison with respective average levels since 2000. The drop in reporting resulted from the reduction of "nil" returns, particularly in the calendar years 2005, 2006 and 2007. In Africa, 16 States participated in the Register in 2005, 15 in 2006 and 8 in 2007. In Asia, 27 States participated in 2005, 26 in 2006 and 21 in 2007. In Eastern Europe, 21 States participated in 2005, 22 in 2006 and 22 in 2007. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 21 States participated in 2005, 20 in 2006 and 11 in 2007. Among the Western European and Other States, 30 States participated in 2005, 30 in 2006 and 29 in 2007.

31. In examining regional variation, the Group of Governmental Experts discussed possible reasons for the decrease in the participation by States from different regions. The Register's focus on the seven major categories of conventional arms has less relevance for some regions. The Group discussed reasons for non-participation or inconsistent participation, which could be attributed to various factors, including political considerations and inadequate institutional capacity. The Group also discussed possible measures that could help to preserve the relevance of the Register and increase participation.

32. The Group noted that only two regional workshops had been held since the last Group of Governmental Experts — a workshop for Asian States, held in Bangkok, from 6 to 8 December 2006, and for West African States, held in Dakar on 9 and 10 June 2009. The Group discussed the importance of regional workshops as a way to improve participation in the regions and to make such participation more consistent.

33. In addition, the Office for Disarmament Affairs responded to requests by regional forums to discuss the Register's operation since the last review period by: a presentation at the Forum for Security Cooperation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Vienna in 2007; a presentation of information at a workshop entitled "MANPADS and all its aspects" held at North Atlantic Treaty Organization headquarters in Brussels in June 2007; and a presentation at the Third Meeting of States Parties to the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions in Preparation for the Conference of the States Parties to be held in 2009 (Washington, D.C., 22 January 2009).

G. Access to data and information reported

34. The Group discussed the importance of easy and reliable access to data and information submitted by States to the Register. Such information is an important tool in maintaining the relevance of the Register and increasing the Register's utility as a confidence-building tool. In this regard, the Office for Disarmament Affairs briefed the Group on efforts undertaken based on the recommendations of the 2006 Group of Governmental Experts on making the Register database more user-friendly. The Group welcomed the report of the Office for Disarmament Affairs on the pilot project conducted in 2008 aimed at exploring the feasibility of the electronic filing of reports to the Register. The Group also expressed its support of the plan to overhaul the Register database with a view to expanding its search capacity and making access to the database more interactive and dynamic, thus increasing the utility of the database.

35. The Group discussed the importance of States providing updated information on their national points of contact, particularly to ensure the possibility of direct bilateral contacts between States to resolve possible discrepancies. The Group observed that some progress had been made by States since the last review in providing information on national points of contact. To date, 139 States had supplied points of contact information. However, the Group noted that some States did not update their point-of-contact information on an annual basis, as invited on the standardized reporting form and simplified "nil" reporting form. For example, only 75 countries updated their point-of-contact information in 2008; and during the period since the last review of the Register, 12 States out of 137 that reported at least once had not provided any updated contact information.

H. Role of the United Nations Secretariat

36. The Group noted the important role of the Secretariat in increasing awareness and familiarity among Member States about the Register. The Secretariat maintains a significant amount of information and documents on its website related to the Register and the subject of arms transparency, including the annual consolidated

reports of the Secretary-General, the reports of the Groups of Governmental Experts and the standardized reporting forms, among others. The Group particularly appreciated the significant work of the Office for Disarmament Affairs in producing and disseminating useful materials related to the Register.[4]

37. In addition, the Group noted the continuing and important role of the Office for Disarmament Affairs in enhancing awareness of the operation and procedures of the Register, encouraging timely submission of reports, developing a new Register website, assisting States with technical queries, updating the national points of contact, and highlighting the Register both within and outside the United Nations system, particularly through disseminating information on its website and in hard copies as requested by the 2003 and 2006 Groups. In particular, the Group noted the side event on the Register's operation in the First Committee meetings of the General Assembly at the sixty-third session, during which the Office for Disarmament Affairs "Fact Sheet on the United Nations Conventional Arms Register" had been discussed in order to facilitate discussion on improving the operation of and participation in the Register.

III. Further development of the Register

A. Maintaining the relevance and universality of the Register

38. The Group discussed the importance of the Register maintaining its relevance for Member States and adapting the Register to common security concerns. The Group said that maintaining the continued relevance of the Register facilitates the objective of universality and noted that non-participation might also be due to armed conflicts, severe political crises, or other negative developments in the international and regional security situation. The Group emphasized that the purpose of the Register is to prevent destabilizing accumulations of weapons, enhance confidence, promote stability and increase international peace and security.

39. The Group reconfirmed one of the observations of the 2006 Group of Governmental Experts, i.e., that the Register's existing scope is perceived to be more relevant to the security concerns of States in some regions than in others. The Register's traditional focus on conventional arms to conduct large-scale offensive operations failed to adequately address the issue of SALW, which is of particular concern in some regions and subregions, and renders the Register less relevant to those particular regions.

B. Categories covered by the Register

40. The Group discussed the potential expansion of existing categories of the Register. The Group highlighted the various technologies and military doctrines utilized by States concerning their relevance to the Register. Some experts expressed the view that amendments to the categories of the Register should help the Register

[4] The Office for Disarmament Affairs has updated the Information Booklet on the Register in English, French and Spanish and a document entitled "Questions and Answers", which is designed to provide easy access to States on guidelines in preparing their annual submissions to the Register.

remain relevant and should reflect current advanced technology in armaments and military equipment, current security and capacity concerns and emerging tactical methods. Some experts acknowledged that the categories covered in the Register should reflect the security concerns of all Member States.

41. In considering the options for adapting the current reporting categories, the Group noted current technological advances, the potential of certain weaponry to offer force projection or to be so-called force multipliers or provide substantial combat support. Some experts considered whether the focus of the existing categories should remain on weapons or systems that support large-scale offensive operations. The Group discussed the conceptual differences among States with regard to whether force projection and force multiplier systems should be reflected within the seven categories. Bearing in mind that some weapon system characteristics may have a greater inherent potential to be destabilizing, because they enhance force projection, there are few or no countermeasures; or they can contribute to the infliction of strategic harm, or that certain classes of military equipment can allow for more effective use of existing military assets, so-called force multipliers, the Group considered the changes to the Register described below.

Category I
Battle tanks

42. The Group found no need to adjust category I of the Register.

Category II
Armoured combat vehicles

43. Experts reviewed proposals for amending category II to include tracked, semi-tracked or wheeled self-propelled vehicles, with armoured protection and cross-country capability: (a) designed and equipped to transport a squad of four or more infantrymen; or (b) armed with an integral or organic weapon of at least 12.5-millimetre calibre or a missile launcher; or (c) equipped for specialized reconnaissance, command and control of troops or electronic warfare.

Category III
Large-calibre artillery systems

44. Experts reviewed proposals for amending category III to include artillery with a calibre of 50-75 mm and including gun carriers and tractors specially designed for towing artillery.

Category IV
Combat aircraft

45. Experts reviewed proposals for amending category IV to include fixed-wing or variable geometry wing aircraft which are designed, equipped or modified to perform reconnaissance, command and control of troops, electronic warfare and refuelling missions.

Category V
Attack helicopters

46. Experts reviewed proposals for amending category V to include rotary-wing aircraft which are designed, equipped or modified to perform reconnaissance, target acquisition, command and control of troops, electronic warfare and mine-laying missions. Experts also discussed changing the name of the category to "Combat helicopters or military helicopters".

Category VI
Warships

47. Experts reviewed proposals for amending category VI to drop the standard displacement of vessels or submarines to 150 tonnes or more and/or altering the definition with regard to the range of torpedoes.

Category VII
Missiles and missile launchers

48. Experts reviewed proposals for amending category VII to include missiles of below 25 km range and ground-to-air missiles.

C. Expansion of the scope of the Register

49. Experts considered a proposal for adding a new category to the Register, "Armed unmanned aerial vehicles", which represents a class of weapons that are just beginning to be transferred. Some experts also reviewed a proposal to include those vehicles as a subcategory of category IV.

50. Experts discussed adding a new category to the Register, "Small arms and light weapons". The Group debated the benefits of various proposals for clarifying the specific weapons included in a potential new SALW category. Experts expressed the view that more transparency for SALW will keep the Register relevant for vast numbers of Member States in various regions that have not engaged in international transfers of arms from the seven categories but that have security concerns related to the uncontrolled spread of SALW. In particular, the introduction of SALW as a new category was underlined as a central security concern for the regions of Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean that could develop interest and encourage continued and more meaningful participation in the Register, as well as enhance the implementation of existing legally binding instruments that complement the objectives of the Register.

51. Experts expressed the view that the introduction of SALW as a new category will assist in monitoring and highlighting destabilizing accumulations of SALW, although some experts mentioned the need for clearer definitions of SALW and capacity difficulties related to compiling data on SALW transfers, including allocation of human and financial resources and establishing mechanisms for accurate reporting. Experts noted the existence of United Nations processes and instruments that address the illicit trade in SALW. These instruments, among other actions, promote transparency in SALW transfers at the regional and subregional levels. However, the Register's unique role as the only global transparency

instrument for conventional arms transfers could complement existing instruments and international efforts to address the problem at the global level.

52. Experts discussed the possibility of including military holdings and national procurement as a distinct and separate category of the Register, while recognizing that security and other concerns may make it difficult for some States to provide such information. In addition, the Group discussed the possibility of adopting a standardized form for the submission of the background information of military holdings and procurement through national production. The Group discussed the view that a standardized form could improve the type of data provided, and make the data easier to access, compare and analyse.

53. The Group recognized the importance of the principle of transparency and its relevance to weapons of mass destruction. While noting that the Register covers only conventional arms, the Group reconfirmed that the question of transparency in weapons of mass destruction was an issue that should be addressed by the General Assembly.

D. Overhaul of the Register database and electronic filing of reports

54. The Office for Disarmament Affairs reported to experts that the electronic filing of reports was possible without special equipment, based on outcomes of the pilot project conducted by the Office. The Group stressed the importance of the Secretariat's efforts to support the electronic filing of reports to the Register.

55. The Group supported the efforts of the Office for Disarmament Affairs to overhaul the Register database, as requested by the 2006 Group of Governmental Experts, based on new software that enables the quick and detailed search of information provided to the Register. That process will also allow the electronic submission of reports to the Register. The information provided through the electronic reports will feed directly into the database, resulting in a far higher degree of efficiency, security and accuracy. The Group noted that the support of Member States, through financial contributions and participating in future testing of the system, will assist in the timely conclusion of these major initiatives.

E. Reporting methods

56. The Group encouraged States that have provided optional background information on national policies to keep such information up to date and to confirm in their annual submission that their previous information remains current.

57. The Group considered the existing standardized reporting forms for exports and imports of the seven major conventional arms and for "nil" returns in order to simplify them. The Group discussed a revised standardized form for "nil" reports with a view to facilitating Member State participation in the Register.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

58. The Group concluded that the Register continues to be an important confidence-building measure and that significant efforts have been made in promoting the relevance of the Register. The Group noted the importance of continued progress towards the goal of universal participation in order to enhance the effectiveness of the Register as a global confidence-building measure and expressed the need to address continued and consistent participation in the Register.

59. The Group noted the importance of the relevance of the Register and expressed its view that relevance is related to the meaningful participation of Member States in the Register and the portion of the international arms trade reflected in the reports.

60. The Group concluded that efforts should continue at enhancing participation in the Register, including workshops, increased cooperation between the United Nations Secretariat and relevant regional/subregional organizations, as well as outreach activities by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the regional disarmament centres. The Group underlined the importance of identifying opportunities for outreach on the Register and urged the Office for Disarmament Affairs to work with Member States to reinvigorate the practice of holding regional workshops on a regular basis, subject to financial support from the United Nations, Member States and other voluntary contributions.

61. The Group also recognized the need to provide the Office for Disarmament Affairs with adequate resources and financial assistance to support efforts to enhance participation and achieve universality in the Register. Experts welcomed voluntary contributions to the Secretariat and encouraged bilateral assistance to Member States, where appropriate, in support of the Register.

62. The Group reaffirmed the importance of regular and timely reports to the Register, including "nil" returns. The Group also emphasized that a "nil" report is as important as a report on specific imports and exports. The Group therefore agreed upon an amended, simplified "nil" reporting form.

63. The Group suggested two improvements to the standardized reporting form:

(a) On the standardized form for reporting exports and imports, the row for category VII has been split in two to differentiate subcategories (a) and (b);

(b) The section of the forms that include columns A through E and the "Remarks" section have been merged to highlight the importance of qualitative information related to the transfers.

64. With regard to the proposals in paragraphs 42 to 48 above, the Group noted that such issues merited review by future Groups of Governmental Experts.

65. The Group concluded that the issue of the inclusion of SALW as a new Register category merited continued review by future Groups of Governmental Experts.

66. The Group emphasized the importance of providing details of national points of contact as part of the standardized reporting forms and updating this information

as appropriate in order to facilitate regular, accurate and efficient reporting and communication.

67. The Group noted that the provision of guidance to Member States could have the effect of improving the uniformity and utility of data provided as background information on military holdings and procurement through national production.

68. The Group expressed its satisfaction with the efforts of the Office for Disarmament Affairs in implementing the recommendations of the 2006 Group of Governmental Experts, particularly with regard to establishing a process for the electronic filing of submissions and overhaul of the Register's database.

69. The Group reaffirmed the central role of the Secretariat in facilitating the continued operation and progress of the Register, which should be one of the primary missions of the Office for Disarmament Affairs. The Group reflected on the financial challenges faced by the Office for the operation of the Register. To that end, the Group expressed its view that the Office for Disarmament Affairs should be provided with adequate financial resources and personnel to maintain and enhance its role in promoting the Register.

70. The Group reiterated the importance of regular reviews of the Register in order to review its continuing operation and its further development. The Group recommended that future Groups of Governmental Experts be given ample time in which to conduct their programme of work to review the Register, based on the widest possible range of views. The Group noted that the Register review process would benefit from larger numbers of experts representing wider geographical representation. The Group underlined the fact that this Group of Governmental Experts had less time than previous ones to conduct their work, as the 2003 Group of Governmental Experts had five weeks and the 2006 Group had four weeks. The shortened time frame limited discussions on issues relevant to the Register's operation and scope.

B. Recommendations

71. The Group encouraged increased and consistent participation by States in the Register in order to promote universality. In this regard, the Group recommended that the Secretariat continue to assist Member States to build capacity to submit meaningful reports, including capacity to report on SALW, and encourage States to submit "nil" returns, where appropriate.

72. The Group reaffirmed the recommendations made by the 2006 Group of Governmental Experts in their report (A/61/261).

73. The Group recommended that Member States utilize the new versions of the standardized and "nil" reporting forms in their future submissions to the Register.

74. The Group recommended holding the next regular review of the Register by a Group of Governmental Experts in 2012.

75. The Group recommended that the Secretary-General seek the views of Member States, including whether the absence of SALW as a main category in the United Nations Register has limited the relevance of the Register and directly affected decisions on participation.